



## Fine dining at fine prices and an authentic island experience in Aruba's "Sunrise City"

Any repeat visitor will tell you that one of Aruba's main attractions is the diversity and quality of its restaurants. Wide varieties of ethnic cuisines are served on the island, as there are a bounty of eateries offering fresh seafood and "American Style Steakhouses."

Those seeking the unusual and discovering dining spots that are favorites with island residents will do well to look towards San Nicolaas, Aruba's "Sunrise City" for not only a unique dining experience, but also great value for their dollar, always a plus to the enjoyment of your meal.

Located on the main street and one of the first spots hungry tourists will notice, and even a stop on some of the smaller tours, is Charlie's Bar, which has become a San Nicolaas legend. Started by Charlie Brouns Senior countless years ago, it is now under the management of a third generation by the name of Charlie Brouns, and is home to not only a delightful ambiance, but also what has to be the largest collection of memorabilia found anywhere. Reasonable prices and a friendly and informative staff make it a fun stop for lunch or a cold drink while touring the island.

Those that have decided to spend some time snorkeling and sunbathing at the pristine environs of Baby Beach or Roger's Beach MUST patronize the Coco Beach Bar for their lunch. Boasting three terraces that afford one of the most beautiful vistas of the Caribbean Sea, they offer fresh Catch of the Day Aruban Style for as little as \$11.50, or for meat eaters, a chicken and ribs BBQ platter for only \$7.50. For those that like to keep going with light dining, their freshly made authentic fish soup served with Pan Bati and fresh lime will hit the spot at only \$4.00. Owner Lydia Briesen and her friendly crew deliver a memorable meal in one of Aruba's loveliest locations every day except Monday from 11:00 AM until 7:00 PM, making it worth your while to consider having your main meal of the day as a late lunch or early dinner, as portions are ample.

Tucked away in the back streets of San Nicolaas is one of "Aruba's best kept gourmet dining secrets," (to quote a frequent American visitor) Astoria Restaurant. The team of René Koppejan at the bar and Chef Harold v/d Berg in the kitchen, plus a delightful courtyard setting makes Astoria one of the most charming dining experiences one can find in Aruba. Harold's gourmet touch with fresh fish and shrimp produces dishes such as "Shrimp Cocktail with Whiskey Sauce" or "Garlic Grouper," which are as appealing to the eye as the taste buds (or *taste butts* as their quaint menu declares.) Even though they are no longer printed on the menu, be sure to order Harold's famous "Bacon Potato Soup" or "Tomato Cheese Soup" two dishes that are so popular with regular customers that they travel all the way from Oranjestad simply for that, and so he feels he must accommodate his loyal patrons. Astoria Restaurant opens their air-conditioned dining room at 11:00 AM for lunch, and their lovely patio, where you can eat under the shade of an enormous Flamboyon tree, at 4 PM, once the day has cooled off a bit. When entering San Nicolaas, take the left fork at the Valero Station at the beginning of town and turn right at the first street, where you will see a sign for Astoria Restaurant.

When dining in San Nicolaas, one will find themselves rubbing elbows with Valero workers that patronize these places for almost all their meals, tourists, islanders and a real mix of the population of Aruba. The food is invariably excellent, and the prices and ambiance are delightful. If you relish the authentic island experience and an opportunity to discover the dining secrets of your destinations, that rent a car and make the trip for a wonderful island memory you will treasure.